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CURING RITUAL OF THE TONGWE TRADITIONAL DOCTOR: ITS PROCESS AND LOGIC

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to analyze the logic and process of the curing ritual conducted by the traditional doctor of the Tongwe, a people of West Tanzania.

In May 1972, the author underwent formal rites to join the ranks of the mfumo, the traditional doctors. On the basis of this experience, this article analyses actual examples obtained during a new survey in 1980.

Sustained by the divine protection and assistance of the ancestral ghosts and myriad spirits, the curing ritual of the mfumo ordinarily centers upon the tangible incarnation of the wills of the mysterious beings, the source and cause of disease, and their control. The following three pillars support this central core of the ritual: (1) the oracles of the spirits who possess the mfumo and spells he chants during the course of healing process, that is, the verbal aspects of the mfumo's activities; (2) techniques based on symbolic behavior which render invisible mysterious beings into incarnated objects that can be manipulated; and (3) a profound ethno-scientific knowledge that sustains the selection of the animal and vegetable dawa, the traditional medicine.

Among the various aspects of the curing ritual, particular attention has been given to the role vegetable medicine plays in traditional medicine. The Tongwe combine a plant's special characteristics; its habitat, morphology, color, smell, or toxicity, with the nature of the disease to be cured, linking the two through the names of the plants. This suggests the true importance of ethno-etymological study. These particular characteristics of Tongwe medicine reveal a close similarity with those of the Ndembu of Zambia.

INTRODUCTION

My research^{*1} into the slash-and-burn horticultural Tongwe people, who inhabit the woodlands stretching across western Tanzania (Fig.1), can be divided roughly into two. The first is an attempt to grasp their way of life ecologically (Kakeya, 1976); while the second derives from ethnoscience and epistemology, which is the sustaining foundation of the ecological study. In the latter approach, I have cut my way into the world of the traditional doctor, a world brimming with valuable knowledge of plants and animals.

In May 1972, I underwent formal rites to become a mfumo, a Tongwe traditional doctor. Later I attempted to sketch a summary outline, in order to elucidate the world of the mfumo (Kakeya, 1977, 1978). The path leading to comprehension of that quintessential core of the mfumo's world, however, is quite long, leaving many questions for further research.

In 1980 I had an opportunity to revisit the land of the Tongwe. Although for a short time, I was able to continue my practice of traditional medicine, which taught me a great deal about this fascinating

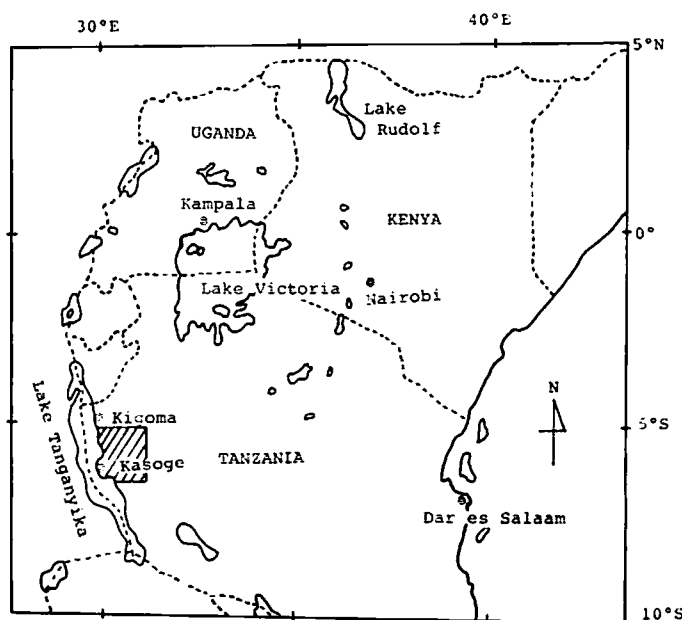


Fig. 1. Study Area

Fig. 1. Study Area.

subject.

In this article, as part of my ongoing research into the mfumo, I will examine the patient curing ritual in attempt to further clarify the process and logic of the mfumo treatment, based on precise description and analysis of actual examples which derive from my 1980 research trip. This paper mainly deals with the following points, which I was not able to set forth in my previous articles.

(1) The curing ritual consists of a chain of symbolic behavior, as it were, which I will analyze herein, to the extent that it is possible.

(2) The spells the mfumo casts comprise an important part of his treatment activities, and likewise provide a valuable clue in elucidating the logic of the curing ritual. The Tongwe believe that casting the mfumo's purpose (as well as that of the sorcerer) into a spell increases the curative (or cursing) power of the dawa (generic term for medicine). In this sense, the incantations of the traditional doctor should be afforded greater attention.

(3) Various types of dawa, generally consisting of mti (plant medicine) and sikomelo (animal medicine), are employed in the treatment of disease. Why a specific plant or animal is selected as dawa is an important question that concerns the very essence of the therapeutic process. I have already provided an overall analysis of sikomelo (Kakeya, 1978), but as for the mti I have been mentioned only its materials so far. In this article I will try to shed some light upon this particular aspect of Tongwe medicine.

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE TRADITIONAL DOCTOR

The examples considered here were obtained while working with a

young traditional doctor, whom I shall call K, in Kasoge village on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika. Kasoge is also the site of chimpanzee observation started by the Kyoto University African Primate Expedition, and now succeeded by the Kasoge Chimpanzee Research Station (KCRS) of the Mahale Mountains Wildlife Research Centre.

Under the leadership of President Nyerere, an advocate of African style socialism, the Tanzanian government is vigorously pushing ahead with its so-called Kijiji cha Ujamaa (communal village policy). This policy aims at collecting together people who live scattered here and there and forming an Ujamaa (communal) village based upon cooperative labor. As a result of this policy, the residents of Kasoge moved to the Ujamaa village on the lake-shore in 1974. Since then, Kasoge has been used exclusively for chimpanzee research. Thus the present residents of Kasoge village are limited to the officers and men who work at KCRS and their families.

Consequently, Kasoge differs from the traditional Tongwe village in organization and constitution of its inhabitants. The nucleus of this village's residents, however, are Tongwe; moreover, I enjoyed an intimate relationship with each of them. It was this particular condition that made my investigation possible.

I participated in almost all of K's activities for a period of eight days, from October 21 through October 28, 1980. K, possessed by mtimi, the indispensable guardian spirit of the mfumo and the Giant Spirit who rules over the wilderness, is a young traditional doctor of great sagacity. He fathomed the purpose of my research, and likewise permitted me to participate in all of his treatment activities. He answered my intricate questions with great patience. The villagers accepted my accompanying K in his tasks, and even recognized me as a bonafide mfumo.

1. Various Aspects of the Activities of the Traditional Doctor

K was extremely busy in the practice of traditional medicine during the eight day period I worked with him. Although hardly typical of the life of a traditional doctor, this brief period did offer examples suitable for grasping many aspects of his activities. For easy reference, I will arrange K's curative activities of this eight day period in a diary-like fashion in Table 1. For my purpose here, I classify these treatment activities as follows:

(1) Collecting medicines; includes the collection and storage of basic dawa, and special dawa for the treatment of specific patients.

(2) Divination; is performed in compliance with the patients' request in order to determine the cause of disease. K employed two methods of divination: (1) possessed by the spirit mtimi, he would determine the cause of disease through conducting a dialogue with the patient, and (2) placing sacred medicine in the palm of his left hand, and covering it with his right, K would divine the cause of disease by rubbing his hands together.

(3) The curing ritual; is conducted in accordance with the method, time, and place indicated in the divination. During the eight day period I assisted K, he conducted 16 curing rituals on behalf of six patients. To be described in detail below, these rituals comprise the subject matter of this article.

(4) Dispensation of medicine; generally, dawa is prescribed in correspondence to symptoms, and handed to the patient.

(5) Kulalikisiya; a form of divination which differs from the above mentioned type of determining the cause of illness through a dialogue with the patient, in which the traditional doctor employs kulalikisiya in order to confirm the effectiveness of his treatment. Here I will treat this form of divination as a part of the curing ritual, examining it in greater detail below.

Table 1. Activities of the traditional doctor (from 21 to 28 Oct., 1980)

Date	Time	Activities	Patient	Place	Notes
Oct.					
21	17:15 to 18:05	C.R.: to conjure <u>isigo</u> out.	A(f)	Near the river, beneath the <u>kagobole</u> tree. At a trifurcated path.	
21	20:00 to 23:00	Possessed by <u>mtimi</u> , the <u>mfumo</u> danced.	-	In Kasoge village.	Welcoming banquet given in my honor.
22	17:30 to 18:40	C.R.: to purge <u>isigo</u> .	A(f)	Near the river, beneath the <u>kagobole</u> tree.	
22	20:00 to 20:40	<u>Kulalikisiya</u> .	A(f),W(f)	In the bush behind the house.	A and W not present.
22	21:00 to 21:30	Divination.	C(f),B(m)	Inside the house.	
23	7:00 to 7:20	Affirming the results of <u>kulalikisiya</u> .	A(f),W(f)	In the bush behind the house.	A and W not present.
23	15:35 to 17:10	Collecting <u>mti</u> .	-	In the bush near Kasoge village.	
23	18:40 to 19:30	C.R.: to remove the odor of <u>iseya</u> .	W(f)	Near the river.	
23	19:58 to 20:43	C.R.: to purge <u>mkosi</u> .	C(f)	In the kitchen.	
24	Afternoon.	Preparing <u>dawa</u> for <u>lijonga</u> shell.	-	In Kasoge village.	
24	19:25 to 19:33	C.R.: to inspire dreams.	C(f)	Near the river.	
24	20:33 to 21:00	C.R.: to be blessed with children.	W(f)	At a trifurcated path.	
25	Early morning.	Divination.	D(m)	In the house.	Obtained information after-words.
25	18:00	Giving <u>mti</u> to A.	A(f)	In the house.	
25	18:30	Giving <u>sikomelo</u> to E.	E(f)	In the house.	Treatment for E's child.
25	18:35 to 19:30	C.R.: to purge <u>mkuli</u> .	F(m)	In the kitchen.	

continued

Date	Time	Activities	Patient	Place	Notes
25	20:00 to 20:40	Divination, possessed by <u>mtimi</u> .	C(f),D(m)	In the house.	
26	6:35	Dispensation of <u>iluko</u> .	W(f)	At the door of the house.	
26	7:00 to 8:00	C.R.: to break <u>mlosi</u> 's curse.	D(m)	In the kitchen.	During the divination below, a substitute helped in the treatment.
26	7:30 to 8:30	Divination, possessed by <u>mtimi</u> .	G(f)	In the house.	
26	8:55 to 10:00	C.R.: to break <u>mlosi</u> 's curse.	D(m)	In the bush, by the <u>msekela</u> tree.	
26	15:47 to 17:00	C.R.: to purge <u>mkosi</u> .	F(f)	At a termite hill.	
26	17:30 to 18:25	C.R.: to purify the D's body.	D(m)	In the kitchen.	
26	18:30	Dispensation of <u>mti</u> .	D(m)	In the house.	
27	14:30 to 15:55	C.R.: to break <u>mlosi</u> 's curse.	G(f)	At a trifurcated path.	
27	17:00 to 18:25	C.R.: to purge <u>mkuli</u> .	C(f)	At a termite hill.	
27	20:00	Dispensation of <u>mti</u> .	H(f)	In the house.	
28	18:10 to 19:20	C.R.: to purify the F's bedroom.	F(m)	In the bedroom.	
28	19:30 to 20:40	C.R.: to expel <u>mkosi</u> .	G(f)	In the house.	
28	22:00 to 22:33	C.R.: to purify A's body and mind, to effect a real reconciliation with her husband.	A(f), A's husband	In the kitchen.	
C.R., Curing Ritual.			(f), female; (m), male.		

(6) Dancing: bears no relation to divination. Suddenly a spirit possesses the traditional doctor (mtimi in K's case) and he begins to dance. Or at celebrations and feasts, the mfumo is possessed by the spirit and dances in response to the people's requests. Such was the case during a welcoming banquet given in my honor when K, possessed by mtimi, danced a celebration dance.

In addition to the above listed activities, the mfumo also serves as a priest in the initiation ritual of the traditional doctor and the ritual of rising status called kufimbula, both of which are rarely performed. We might say that the above mentioned patterns of activities represent almost all aspects of the everyday life of the mfumo.

This article will focus, in a broad sense, on the analysis of specific examples of the curing ritual, including the kulalikisiya and dispensation of medicine. In order to better comprehend the background, however, I would like to first look more closely at the process of dawa collection and divination.

2. Dawa Collection

Regular dawa normally used in treatment is prepared and stored in the mfumo's mseke (basket container for medicines). Dawa can be divided roughly into two categories; mti (plant medicine) and sikomelo (animal medicine). Although mti is the primary object of the mfumo's collection trips into the bush, he sometimes, blessed with a stroke of good luck, comes across some sikomelo materials, which he generally obtains from his teacher or colleagues. Also he occasionally obtains sikomelo from his fellow Tongwe, who acquire it quite by chance.

When the supply of regular medicine in the mseke begins to run short and must be replaced, or in order to obtain mti necessary for the treatment of a specific patient, the mfumo will go into the mountains, forest, and bush in search of mti.

During the afternoon of October 23, K set out to gather mti in order to replenish the supply in his mseke, and collected eight kinds of mti in approximately two hours. Here I will take up three types of mti and present a general overview of the collection procedures employed.

The following descriptions are based on records taken during observation and tape recordings of spells. Parentheses will indicate the detailed explanations and interpretations I received later.

(i) Mubundu (Entada abyssinica)*²

Standing in front of this tree, the mfumo took some mbufu (white corn flour) in his right hand and sprinkled it on the tree while chanting a spell;

Lwanpemba lwanpasi no majembe (a standard phrase used to summon forth the spirits). Please lend me your power today. I have come to gather you. That is, you are the great mfumo, who sees and knows all things. Today, we have come to request good health, fruitfulness, and furthermore, prosperity. Today, I have come to gather you. This is the food you eat.

After completing his spell, K scraped off some bark, picked it up, and put it in his basket.

(ii) Msekela (Antidesma venosum)

The collection process is the same as for mbundu through the sprinkling of mbufu on the tree. The mfumo's spell is as follows;

I call upon all mgabo (spirits)! Mahasa (twin spirit), Lyangombe (spirit to whom the Tongwe pray for help in times of crisis), Kasindye (agrippa spirit), and Msimu (ancestral ghost)! Lwanpemba lwanpasi no majembe. Today we have come to gather you, msekela. We beseech of

you good health, fruitfulness, and prosperity. If those of us whose bodies suffer because of illness could borrow your help, we could quell that suffering. May the roots I dig here today be straight, indicating you consent to work for the health of our people.

Concluding his spell, K dug away the earth to examine the growth and shape of the roots. "See, just I prayed, the roots are perfectly straight," he said. In fact, the roots had grown straight down, neither twisted nor curved. He cut off what he needed with his hatchet.

(iii) Mkungumwelu (Sterculia quiqueloba)

Mkungumwelu! Great Healer! You see and know all things, both far and near. As the dawa which inspires our dreams, I have come to collect you. If some evil spirit should set upon our bodies, I ask that whatever this thing be, it will appear in the patient's dreams and speak out of its own accord, like a human being. Mkungumwelu! You see and know things far away. I pray that the entire body of the patients I treat will be purified "white" (which symbolizes health and purity). May mkosi (the accumulated impurities within the body, also called ntesi) be driven out of their bodies. May we be blessed with fruitfulness, prosperity, and health.

K, while intoning this spell, sprinkled the tree with mbufu and cut away the bark for his medicine basket.

The collection procedures for the remaining five types of trees were roughly the same. However, there are a number of variations. For example, in collecting mti against a powerful mlosi (sorcerer), it is necessary for the mfumo to remove all of his clothes, or sometimes hold his breath, while digging the roots. Likewise, intricate ritual activities are necessary in the collection of very particular mti (Kakeya, 1977: 418). Excluding the collection of such special mti, however, most collection procedures and patterns are as described above.

In summary, the mfumo stands before the necessary mti tree, calls forth the various spirits and solicits their help. He then offers mbufu, or on certain occasions, mpemba (white clay) powder and proceeds with his incantation, entrusting the efficacy of the mti, to which he offers his prayers, to his spell. Sometimes he will make inquiries of the tree, determining whether the answer is positive or negative by examining the particular shape of the tree. The mti, collected in the various fashions described above, are used in the curing rituals.

3. Divination

The mfumo's cure begins once the source of the disease, and an appropriate method of treatment has been divined. Since I have already discussed the various methods of divination and the mysterious beings, the original source of disease (Kakeya, 1977: 379-391), I will not go into this now. Here, in order to better understand the background of the curing rituals, I will describe an instance of the mfumo, possessed by mtimi, divining the method of treatment and cause of disease via a conversation with mtimi and the patient.

After 8 o'clock in the evening on October 25, K was possessed by the spirit mtimi. I received word from the villagers and ran to the scene. I arrived to find that the conversation between mtimi and the six villagers had already begun. Six villagers were: K's wife, W; their daughter, B; B's wife, C (a patient); and another man, D (a patient). When mtimi possessed K, W (also a mfumo) played the role of a mediator between the villagers and mtimi, and afterwards transmitted mtimi's words to K. Excerpts of the conversation concerning the causes of C's and D's loss of health and the prescribed method of treatment follow below.

(i) Conversation concerning C's cause of illness and method of treatment.

For many years now, C has not been able to conceive a child, which is thought to be a blessing and treasure among the Tongwe. In addition, she has not been well recently. B, her husband, therefore requested that K undertake to treat her.

Mtimi: Obtain a chicken. This chicken is not for me. It is for someone else. You all go into the mwisala (bush) and search out a termite hill with the opening unblocked. When you arrive there, close off the entrance of the termite hill and prepare an ifubo cure. (As described below, this method of treatment is similar to the sauna treatment process.) After completing the ifubo cure, bathe with the ifubo ifile (a cold ifubo). Then leave that place and go to the path. When you arrive, step over the dawa. After that, return home as fast as your legs will carry you.

W: Shall we conduct the treatment with the hole in the termite hill closed?

Mtimi: The mfumo will remain behind and open up the hole.

W: When should we begin?

Mtimi: When the sun sets.

W: Has something taken possession of her (C) body? Is it isigo (an evil spirit who lives in pools of water and the like)? Or perhaps...?

Mtimi: Have you never heard of mkuli (the spirit of a dead person)?

W: What! Mkuli?

Mtimi: Mkuli is building a nest in the kinena (part of the body below the navel).

W: Should the chicken be male or female?

Mtimi: Is the patient a woman?

W: Yes, a woman.

Mtimi: Then take a female chicken with you.

The following is a scene where B reports the contents of a dream C (B's wife) had seen the night before.

B: There were people sitting in the house. One of them noticed a stranger approaching. The stranger was wearing black clothes. (Black symbolizes an evil being, which, in this case, K interpreted to mean mkuli.) He approached the house and tried to enter. Then the people in the house shouted "go away!" (The people in the house symbolized the medicine that had been given to C.) The stranger answered, "If you refuse me, I shall return home." And then he said, "Well, at least I'll take this bunch of bananas with me." "Go away, go away," the people shouted. "I will go, but I wanted to enter this house. And even so, you chase me away. If that be the case, I will take this bunch of bananas with me." Saying that, the stranger went away. (The villagers in the room broke into a robust laughter at the line, "I will take this bunch of bananas with me," which seems to suggest an avaricious person.) I wonder if that odd man will come back again? What do you think?

Mtimi: Since he has been driven away, it is not likely that he will return a second time. He was ordered by another person to come and get a certain "thing" (refers in this case to C, B's wife), but he failed. (Thus mtimi hints that mlosi has dispatched mkuli on his behalf.) So, he thought that taking the bunch of bananas would do just as well. Although a piece of wood would have sufficed, he took the bananas, since they were near at hand, and left.

C: My head was really aching then.

Mtmi: Who were with you in the house; men, or were they women?

C: Women. I was really scared.

W: (To B) Mtmi says that you are to find a female chicken with black feathers. Then he said, go into the bush and conduct the treatment. (In a loud voice W summarized mtmi's words for B, who is hard of hearing.)

B: (To mtmi) Just a chicken, right? We don't need any cloth?

Mtmi: Yes, you need cloth, black cloth.

The above conversation concerns the cause of C's illness and the method of treatment prescribed. Mtmi suggested that it is possible that the reason C has gone so long without bearing a child is that she has been possessed by mkuli.

Her treatment was conducted approximately as mtmi had instructed. I took part in this curing ritual, but will not be able to provide an analyses of it here, since I have yet to complete the translation of the tape-recorded spells and the research necessary for their interpretation. Here, however, I will explain the unobstructed termite hill related in the conversation, which plays an important role in the curing ritual.

It is generally thought among the Tongwe that the termite hill is the dwelling place of mlosi and mkuli. Removing the dawa which mlosi has prepared and mkuli from the patient and returning them to their original dwelling place comprises the core of the curing ritual. In this case, the unobstructed termite mound symbolizes C's uterus. The treatment began by closing up the entrance hole of the hill with grass and tree leaves. This process represents the reenactment of mlosi or mkuli closing off the parturient canal. Upon the completion of the treatment process, the mfumo cleared the entrance of the leaves and grass. That is, the opening of the parturient canal is symbolized by the treatment. (Excluding the termite hill phase, the above process is the same as the treatment procedures for women possessed by isigo, which I will describe below.

(ii) Conversation concerning the method of treatment for D.

Mtmi: (To D) Listen very carefully. The first treatment is to bathe at home with ifubo.

D: In the evening?

Mtmi: Yes, in the evening. You must not put anything in the ifubo other than the "thing" which you will carry outside and throw away. (Here "thing" refers to the dirt beneath K's bed, which mlosi has used to curse D. The dirt must be taken out and then put into the ifubo in order to break mlosi's curse.)

Wash with ifubo the following morning, and then with ifubo ifile. If there are no people at the dumping ground, bathe there. But if there are people at the dumping ground, go into the bush to bathe.

Then, before the morning ends, go into the mwisala and wash with ifubo. After that wash with the other ifubo (cold ifubo). When the bathing has been completed, have someone rub sindik (an anti-mlosi dawa) into your skin. This phase of the treatment is to be conducted at a place where three paths join together. The mfumo will have prepared the path with white and black dawa. You should step over the medicine and return home. When you have returned to the village, wash once again with ifubo. This is to drive out mkosi and purify your body.

With these treatments the exorcism of mkosi and cleansing of your body will be completed. All that remains is to eliminate the impurities from within your body, purifying it "white". Afterwards, wash yourself with ifubo. Cold ifile will suffice. And do not forget

the luhugulo (a grass which brushes against people when they pass through the bush. Sorcerers often use this grass in placing their curses, since people come into direct contact with it when passing through the bush.)

D: Should I paint the dawa the mfumo gives me on my body, or should I use it for an enema?

Mtimi: Both dawa for an enema and dawa mixed with oil and rubbed on the body are necessary.

Mtimi: (to W) You know, don't you, what dawa is to be painted on the body? Won't you come with me and help collect some? You know all about it.

W: I don't know. Please have him (pointing to K) go to the top of the mountain and dig the roots. There is a lot of dawa at the top.

The above conversation outlines the treatment procedures for D. He is anxious to obtain a good wife, but none of the women he has courted recently has shown any interest in a lasting relationship. Thinking this quite strange, he visited K and requested divination. I was not able to be present at the divination, but the results, which I was informed of later, are as follows:

A woman who had previously lived together with D for quite some time, remained in love with him after they separated. She has concocted a dawa to prevent D from marrying another woman. At the same time, the inhabitants of D's village, Nkonkwa, became angered at his unseemly behavior within the village, and likewise placed a curse upon him. The treatment method mtimi indicated during the conversation, which I will examine in the following section, will break these curses and purify his body.

The mfumo, through divination, is able to determine the root causes of illness and unhappiness, as well as prescribe the time, place, and treatment methods of the curing ritual, as the above examples make clear. On occasion he will give dawa to inspire dreams to patients, and upon adjudging the contents of these dreams, accurately determine the true cause of disease. Here I have discussed divination by spirit-possession; but must add that other methods of divination are similar in content.

THE CURING RITUAL

The patient curing rituals are conducted in accordance with the prescriptions in such divination processes as described above. Although the curing ritual can be divided into several categories (Kakeya, 1977: 424-427, 434-435), its overall framework is dictated by the nature of the mystical being that comprises the source of the patient's affliction. In fact, it can be said that the primary work of the mfumo is made manifest in the curing of diseases that mlosi and the evil spirits bring, as the greater half of the treatments requested of the mfumo belong to this type.

Below I will examine the treatment processes in detail of two of the six patients K treated during my sojourn among the Tongwe, whose illnesses were determined to be caused by isigo and mlosi (sorcerer). As I stated at the beginning, the focus of this chapter will be to explain the meaning of the symbolic treatment behavior and analyze the spells and dawa. Although the dawa of the two examples I will consider here are almost the same, there are many different kinds. For this reason, I will limit my remarks in this section to simply listing the different dawa materials, examining them in greater detail in a subsequent section.

1. Example 1—Isigo as Cause of Illness

This example concerns A, a woman who, regardless of the fact that she had previously given birth to one child, has been unable to conceive a child for the past four or five years. Although it is possible to discern three causes for her illness, the primary cause is isigo. This evil spirit seizes women who come to scoop water from the pools where it lurks and causes them to become sterile. Mlosi constitutes still another source of her illness. Using dawa, one of her relatives, a mlosi, tempted isigo and enjoined it to take possession of her. A final but minor cause is her feelings of vexation towards her husband, father of her first child, and her unconsciously conceived thoughts of hatred and anger towards him. (The divination which produced this diagnosis took place before my arrival in Kasoge.)

Her curing ritual was divided into three parts. The purpose of the first treatment was to conjure isigo out and inveigle it to state its demands, and also disgorge her feelings of vexation. The second phase aimed to purge isigo from her body and break the curse of mlosi, while the object of the third treatment was to purify her body "white" and effect a true reconciliation with her husband.

(i) The first curing ritual

Date and time of treatment: October 21, 5:15 to 6:05 in the evening.
Participants: K, A, A's first child, and the author.

Place: Near the Kasiha River which flows past the Kasoge village, beneath the Kagobole tree (Zizyphus abyssinica); and at a trifurcated path.

We went to the Kagobole tree near the river and prepared the ground of the treatment site with a hatchet. Then the mfumo drew a circle (for purification) with white powder (powdered maize) and set a nkanda (earthen pot) in it. The mfumo drew an effigy on the side of the nkanda (representing isigo) and traced it with red mtungulu and mtunu dawa.

Thereupon the mfumo chanted the following spell:

Isigo, you who possess this woman, depart from her body tomorrow. Isigo! Show yourself before us and tell us what it is that you demand. We have prepared this ifubo for you. Show yourself and state your demands, as well as the proper fee I should receive for my services.

Next A spoke:

I have uttered words of hatred against my husband. He was not pleased to hear of my pregnancy. My first childbirth was very difficult. I said that if I had known I would suffer so much, I would have had an abortion. But I did not mean a word of what I said. I ask that the dawa the mfumo prescribes work its cure. My feelings of hatred have completely disappeared, and I have abandoned my hateful words. You "thing" that has possessed me, come out. Take yourself somewhere far away. May gladness and rejoicing descend upon my husband.

Placing some water in the nkanda, the mfumo administered the dawa by laying it out inside the nkanda in the shape of a cross. (It is said that the cross shape symbolizes all of the paths that exist.) The prescribed dawa consisted of nine types: msongatti, likibanga, buhasa, mtungulu, mkungumwelu, msekela, kagobole, mtunu, and msubu.

Once the medicine had been properly arranged in the nkanda, the mfumo rose and chanted a spell, while shaking a lusanga (ringing rattle).

With this mti, I call forth isigo. With this mti, I call forth iswa (people mlosi has cursed; his slaves, as it were). We have prepared this ifubo here in order to summon forth isigo. May she be blessed with prosperity, fertility, and health!

The mfumo withdrew after completing his spell. A removed her clothes and washed herself with a cold ifubo solution. This method of treatment is called ifubo ifile (cold ifubo). With this, the curing ritual by the river ended, and the mfumo and patient departed.

Arriving at the trifurcation in the path (nsila masango), which lies on their way home, they began the curing ritual once again. (Therapy conducted at a trifurcated intersection is a pattern that appears frequently. In this particular case it represents a division of the path on which the patient has thusfar come into two paths. Mlosi and isigo will depart along one route, while the third fork signifies the new path the patient will follow.) With white powder, the mfumo drew a circle in the middle of the intersection and lines from the circle into the remaining two paths. Then he placed the nkanda containing the water in the circle. While chanting a spell, the mfumo next added buhasa mti to the earthen pot.

I call upon all mgabo; mahasa, lyangombe, kasindye, msimu! I entreat you to gather together and help us this day. Today this woman will bathe with ifubo. If isigo has taken possession of her, we ask that it be revealed in her dreams. At exactly this time tomorrow, I will drive it away.

After the spell, the mfumo added mti, one after another, to the nkanda. The mti used here were the same types employed in the curing ritual by the river.

The mfumo rose and chanted another spell, while shaking his rattle:

Please hear me, myriad spirits! Today this woman will bathe with ifubo. Tomorrow I will drive isigo away. I ask that isigo appear and speak to us of its own accord. Isigo? If you feel inclined, show yourself and tell us your demands. Anytime will do reveal yourself!

Msimu! Here, today, at this three forked intersection, this woman will bathe with ifubo and wash isigo away. Mlosi has placed a curse upon her, and the mfumo will break that curse. Isigo! Come here and speak to us in person. Even if you do not appear before us, I will cast you out tomorrow. This woman will wash herself in this kapelo (the circle drawn with white powder, which signifies the place where mti will be used to purify the patient). She will bathe twice at this three forked intersection (in addition to once more later).

Everyone passes along this path. Isigo! I think you too will pass along this path. Tomorrow this woman will come to expel you from her body. Show yourself and speak to us in person. Also tell us how my services should be rewarded. This ifubo contains the mgabo's dawa. If it is really you, isigo, that has taken possession of this woman, come here and speak. I know that it is you that has prevented her from conceiving a child. She herself desires that you be driven from her body. She has purged herself of anger and hatred towards her husband. She says that not a trace of the wrath she once felt remains in her heart. She wants a "treasure" child, something which she sees other people are ordinarily able to obtain.

If it is really you, isigo, come out! Generally, people will set upon their way home, when given an ihonga for their journey. (Ihonga is a souvenir or a meal to be eaten during one's journey.) You too return home and settle yourself down. Do not ever set upon a human being again. We are now standing at this three-forked intersection. If mlosi should take one "path", we shall take the other "path", and break that curse.

Then A washed with the ifubo.

After she finished bathing, we proceeded a little down the path, which



Fig. 2. Effigy with white powder on the ground in front of the banana stalk.



Fig. 3. Ifubo ifyu treatment.

finger nails. Leveling the ground at a spot very close to the edge of the river, K drew two lines, using the black-colored dawa stored in the lijonga shell. (These lines were drawn to block isigo and mkosi, who now have been washed away, from following us home.) K's wife next tore off a piece of the black cloth and placed it in the small earthen vessel.

Following this, A sat down on a stone that had been set in front of the banana stalk, facing towards the sinking sun. The boiling pot was then removed and set at A's feet. Thereupon she, naked from the waste up, stooped over to assume a position covering the earthen pot. The mfumo completely covered both A and the earthen pot with a large blanket for approximately ten minutes, while she bathed in the steam rising from the sacred mti (Fig.3). This method of treatment is called ifubo ifyu (hot ifubo).

Standing next to A, still beneath the blanket bathing in the ifubo steam, the mfumo chanted the following spell, shaking his rattle:

Myriad spirits! Mahasa, lyangombe! Here, today, we will drive away isigo. If it is really you, isigo, you are to remain here. Do not set upon this woman and follow her home again. The chicken, your food, is here; as well as beads, honey and blankets for you. Take them and leave. All mkosi are to remain here, in this place. If you have been dispatched by someone (the mfumo indirectly hints that it is mlosi who has placed this curse upon A), return at once to the person who sent you. Also, if it be the case that she has gone to your home and disturbed you, she is going to cast you off here, since

Table 2. *Sikomelo*

Material	Remarks
1. Masombwe	Worm snake
2. Nkata	A special throne where <u>mwami</u> (traditional chief) candidate and his wife sit during the installation rite for the <u>mwami</u> .
3. Skull of <u>mwami</u>	A skull of a traditional chief.
4. Skull of <u>mlosi</u>	A skull of people who die from medicines used in the ordeal called <u>mwafi</u> , that is, sorcerers.
5. <u>Nkono</u> fragment	On rare occasions, people eat too much <u>ugali</u> and die. Thus a fragment of the <u>nkono</u> in which the <u>ugali</u> was served is thought to make an excellent <u>sikomelo</u> .

K's wife thereupon joined him in chanting the spell, "All things that prevent this woman from begetting a child! Do not set upon her again." The mfumo continued:

You who prevent this woman from once again bearing a child! Depart from her body! Isigo! Today we will give you food for your journey. Withdraw from this woman. Here is a chicken, beads, and honey*³ for you.

At this point, the mfumo cut the chicken's throat and poured the gushing blood into the two earthen pots, in addition to a third vessel. Then he released the chicken, which began to writhe and twist away its final moments, beating its wings violently. The mfumo resumed his spell:

Now, this is the end. Straighten your "path". (Here, "path" is used metaphorically, referring to the chicken's legs.) Now, may our bodies be purified "white." May our paths be made straight. May we be blessed with children. Lwanpemba lwanpasi no majembe.

This sacrifice of the chicken serves also as a divination. Thus the chicken stretched its legs straight and died, indicating that the spirits had acceded to the mfumo's commands.

Next the mfumo added still more dawa, the earth from around the legs and that directly beneath the center of A's bed, to the earthen pots. As we have seen above, the divination had revealed that mlosi had used this same earth to place a curse upon A. The mfumo then returned to his spell-breaking incantations.

K's wife picked up the large earthen pot, placed it on the stone fireplace, and set fire to the wood we had collected, all in concert with the spell:

Here we will part company. All hatred and anger, thoughts which have obstructed her pregnancy, have been vanquished. We have performed all the necessary spells. Now, myriad mgabo, gather together and lend us your assistance. All mkosi are to remain here. Now the time has come for us to go.

Next A cut each of her finger and toenails with a knife and placed them on a leaf the mfumo pulled off a nearby tree. The mfumo drew an effigy-doll (indicating isigo, see Fig.2) with white powder on the ground in front of the banana stalk, tracing around it with mtunu mti. K's wife then cut off a little of A's hair and put it on the leaf with her toe and

leads through the village. and conducted another ifubo treatment. Placing the mti in the nkanda, the mfumo began his spell, accompanied by the sound of the rattle:

Here is the intersection of three paths. Tomorrow I will come here to oversee your banishment. Mgabo, mahasa, lyangombe, please lend us your helping hands. This woman is unable to conceive a child. It is children that bring prosperity. If it is really isigo that possesses her, leave us tomorrow. Isigo! Come whenever you wish. Likewise, if there is anything that you desire, tell us, and rest assured that we will present it to you. Here, I will end my spells for today!

Patient A once again bathed with ifubo dawa, and then set on her way home.

(ii) The second curing ritual

Date and time of treatment: October 22, 5:30 to 6:40 in the evening.

Participants: K, his wife, Patient A and her first child, and the author.

Place: The same place where the first treatment session was conducted – near the Kasiha River by the Kagobole tree.

Upon arriving at the designated place, the mfumo dug a hole and set up a banana stalk that had been brought along (used to symbolize isigo's dwelling place). Placing three stones alongside, we made a place for a fire. Next the mfumo placed some water into two clay pots, one small and one large, and added mbundu leaves. The mfumo chanted his spell:

Today, if it is really isigo that has taken possession of this woman, we will do away with it. We ask that isigo remain here after we have returned, and that her body be purified perfect "white." We wish for pregnancy and prosperity. May she be blessed with a child. May she be blessed with a child, health, and prosperity. Lwanpemba lwanpasi no majembe. May joy and happiness visit themselves on her. May mungu's (the creator) blessings likewise visit themselves upon her. And finally, if she should request another divination, I pray that it is not isigo who has taken possession of her. Isigo, remain here near the river where the bananas are; this is where you live. We will now take our leave from you.

After finishing his spell, the mfumo threw 10 different types of mti, one after another. into the two earthen pots: buhasa, likibanga, katiyatiya, mbonobono, mtungulu, msongatti, msekela, mkungumwelu, kagobole, and isomata. Next he shaved off a little of each sikomelo (see Table 2) and placed them in the big earthen pot containing the ifubo ifyu solution. The mfumo then added dawa (a powdered mixture burned into charcoal of mbeba, electric catfish bones, and kalilobali roots, combined with the roots of a tree that has fallen across and blocked a path traveled by many people).

The mfumo then took the black chicken and held it above A's head. Intoning his spell, he passed the chicken along her back, bringing it down to her feet. "Isigo! This chicken is an ihonga for you. Likewise, we ask that you slide away from this woman's body and depart from among us, just as I lower this chicken from her head to her feet." The mfumo once again raised the chicken above her head, and this time lowered it along the front of her body, passing it over her abdomen.

Kamuyengesiya! (Name of the spirit which dwells at Kasoge.) Myriad mgabo! Join together and please help us in this task. Gather together here; we have come to petition for health, children, and prosperity. If it is really isigo that has taken possession of this woman, leave this place today. This woman no longer belongs to you. Fall from her body and go away!

it is here where you live. Come out of her. Even if you have set upon her just for the fun of it, depart from her here and now. You are not to possess her again. She disclaims you vehemently. If it be the case that she has approached you of her own accord (meaning that she may be a mlosi), then there is nothing that I can do. But if you have possessed her for your own pleasure, or if someone has sent you, depart from her here and now. Go back to the person who has sent you.

The mfumo next put the black dawa kept in the lijonga shell into the chicken blood held aside in the third vessel, and handed it under the blanket to A. "Away with you! Fly away!" Thereupon A poured the mixture into the ifubo.

The ifubo ifyu treatment thus came to an end. The mfumo, still chanting his spell, handed the small earthen pot containing cold water and mti to A. She washed herself with the cold water, removed her wet underclothing, and wrapped herself in a cloth that had been brought along. This is the ifubo ifile (cold ifubo) treatment. The attendant spell was as follows:

Lwanpemba lwanpasi no majembe. May this woman soon beget a child. May all the mkosi that plague her flow from her body and remain in this place. May her body be made pure "white", and may she obtain the things she desires. May she be blessed with children, as well as health and prosperity.

Setting the chicken heart on the edge of his hatchet blade, the mfumo raised it up to A's mouth for her to swallow. (The heart symbolizes the life of the chicken, isigo's ihonga, while the hatchet symbolizes cutting isigo asunder from his roots.) Next the mfumo made light incisions at ten different places on A's body with a razor; the middle of the forehead, pate, back of the neck, chest, at the outside of both elbow joints, at the outside of both knee joints, and on the joints of both big toes, and then rubbed dawa, a soft ointment kept in a kape (blue duiker) horn, into these cuts. (I learned later that the Tongwe consider the heart and head the provenance of life, and thus apply dawa in their vicinity. The dawa rubbed on the back of the neck guards against curses placed on a person from behind, while the dawa applied to the joints of the hands, arms, legs, and feet functions as a type of lubrication, enabling the body to move freely.)

After this phase of the treatment ended, A stepped over the lines the mfumo had drawn with the dawa, and without turning to look back (this is strictly prohibited), ran home as fast as her legs would carry her.

The mfumo collected the dawa into one of the earthen pots and cast a little on the fire to put it out. Tearing off a piece of the cloth A wore, he placed this same fragment, along with the chicken, the black cloth itself, A's finger and toenails, and the leaf on which her hair had been laid, on the effigy drawn with white powder. Concomitant to the spell he then commenced, the mfumo poured the dawa from the earthen pot onto the effigy. Turning the vessel upside down, he covered the entire pile, and finally anchored the pot firmly by covering its base with dirt.

Now, we say farewell. You are to remain here, and never set upon any human being again. May this woman's body be made pure "white." May this dawa permeate her body and bring her "treasure" children, prosperity, and health. If someone has dispatched you to administer dawa to her, you should return to whoever sent you. Now, all thunder, lions, and snakes, (all three are thought to be familiar spirits in the service of mlosi) lay down here and sleep.

I ask that she never be taken possession of again. Depart from her

body once and for all. She has offered mjonso (Vernonia sp., symbolizes an extremely bitter dawa) to you. Now, out with you. May this woman receive that which she desires. Here we separate. Your blanket is here. Your chicken is also here. If she is a being that will cause others trouble (if she is a mlosi), may she receive the fruits of her evil deeds herself. But, if that is not the case, you are to remain here. Now, all of you to whom I have addressed my spells, and all mkosi likewise, remain here. Come out of this woman. Bananas are here for you. It is here that you live.

With these words the mfumo brought the curing ritual to a close. After warning me that it is absolutely imperative that I not look backwards (the evil thing that had possessed A would set upon me if I did so), we started for the village.

(iii) Kulalikisiya

At 8 o'clock in the evening of the same day, K conducted a kulalikisiya divination in the open area behind A's house. He first dug a small hole with his hatchet and outlined it with white powder. Then he placed as many as ten corn-cobs in the hole and sprinkled them with white powder.

Now, tell us whether the things we have endeavored to remove with today's treatment have really departed. (Addressing the corn-cobs), I lay you down to sleep here, and ask that I find you just as I have left you when I return tomorrow. I ask that not one of you have changed your position in even the slightest way.

Thus the mfumo, with this spell, attempted to divine whether he was able to expel isigo.

At 7 o'clock on the following morning the mfumo went to affirm the results of this kulalikisiya divination. Although the white powder that had been sprinkled on the corn-cobs was slightly disturbed, no variation was to be seen in the position on the cobs themselves, indicating that isigo had been successfully exorcised.

(iv) Dispensation of medicine

On the evening of October 25, K gave A a two day supply of three types of mti; kagobole, mbundu, and msekela root--medicines to remove isigo's lingering odor from A's body, rendering her pure "white." By K's instructions, this medicine was to be administered by placing the mti in water just before evening and, after warming slightly the following morning, given as an enema.

(v) The third curing ritual

At 10 o'clock in the evening, this phase of A's treatment was conducted in the hut A uses for her kitchen, in order to purify her body and mind "white," in addition to effecting a real reconciliation with her husband.

During the ifubo remedy, A sat facing her husband, with the ifubo placed between them. The husband put his arm around her shoulder and they both leaned over the ifubo. The mfumo then placed a blanket over them and they bathed in the ifubo steam. Afterwards, both went to the dumping ground and washed their bodies with ifubo ifile. (K later told me that the dumping ground is the most appropriate place for discarding mkosi.)

Since the spell the mfumo chanted during this phase of the cure was approximately the same as those of the first two curing rituals, it need not be repeated here.

2. Example 2—Mlosi as the Cause of Disease

Here I will examine the method of treatment mtimi specified for D

(male) during the divination described in the previous section. This curing ritual aims at breaking a curse placed on him by the woman with whom he previously resided, or possibly one of his fellow villagers angered by D's conduct.

During the evening of mtimi's oracle, D, following mtimi's instructions, took some dirt from under his bed, placed it in the ifubo, and bathed with it. On the following day, the mfumo conducted a three phase during ritual. The first treatment was administered early in the morning in the hut where D's friend, B, kept his hearth; the second was conducted in the bush at the outskirts of the village; and the third took place in the evening in the hut containing D's hearth. The object of the treatment of the previous evening, when D washed himself with ifubo, and the first treatment the next morning was to break the curse placed on him in the village and in the kitchen hut. The second cure will be treated in detail below. The third treatment was conducted in order to drive out any remnants of mkosi from his body, cleansing it pure "white."

Ifubo ifyu and ifubo ifile comprised the nucleus of the three treatments, while the dawa and spells were roughly the same. For this reason, only the second curing ritual, conducted to expell the mlosi's dawa and mkosi from D's body and discard them in the bush, will be examined in detail here.

(i) The ritual conducted in the bush

Date and time: October 26, 8:55 to 10:10 in the morning.

Participants: Mfumo K, D, B and C (to render assistance), and the author.

Place: At the outskirts of the village in the bush where the msekela tree grows.

The mfumo walked behind D along the path into the bush, tearing off the leaves of grass from both sides of the path that D had brushed against. (Called luhugulo, the mfumo said that mlosi also uses this grass to place his curses. It is said that if one takes the leaves of this grass from both sides of the path, holds them together, and utters a curse, he can close off the "path," as it were, and bring unhappiness upon his enemies.)

Leaving the path and cutting our way into the bush, we arrived at a msekela tree. In effect, we had created and branched off into one of the forks of a trifurcated path. Next we leveled the ground around the msekela tree with a hatchet and then gathered some firewood. Facing towards the sun, the mfumo took hold of one of the branches of the msekela tree and began to intone a spell:

Today we have come here to this place. You are the tree called msekela. We have come to remove the nest mkosi has built in this man's body. May he be blessed with health. If he desires to marry, may he realize this desire at once. When this man, desiring to marry, visits a young woman's parents in order to obtain permission, may her parents take to him and accept his proposal. And after they are married, may their life together be filled with joy and laughter.

May the "path" he seeks--the "path" of wealth, abundant harvests, and a woman to become his wife--be opened to him. Lwanpemba lwanpasi no majembe. May he be blessed with health, prosperity, marriage, and children. May mkosi be expelled from his body and he be made pure "white." May he succeed at all things in which he endeavors--all "paths"; may he obtain prosperity, and may many girls interested in marriage visit him. To you who have set your eye upon this man and concocted dawa to prevent him from marrying, may your curse return to visit its evil upon you.

After finishing his spell, the mfumo placed some msekela leaves in a

nkanda. Then he unwrapped a bundle of mixed mubanga, msekela, and mbundu leaves and roots, added them to the nkanda, and continued with his spell:

Now, you are the dawa that cures all. Beginning with mkuli, isigo, and iswa, you cure all diseases. You likewise have the power to drive away mkosi. Now, if you who possess this man be mkosi sent by mlosi, you are to remain here.

Next the mfumo added katiyatiya mti and some likibanga mti to the nkanda and once again returned to the task of intoning the proper spell:

Now, likibanga! Whichever mkosi it may be, you will expell him. Today, this man has come here to this junction of three paths to wash away mkosi. Whichever mkosi you are, you are to remain here in this place. If it is mlosi who conjured up this curse, his curse will surely be broken. May this man's words win the hearts of the women he meets, wherever he may go.

Then the mfumo added some mkungumwelu to the nkanda, and continued with his incantation:

Now, you are the dawa which calls down the spirits! You can chase out mkosi. The spirits are your friends; you are always with the spirits. The spirits kasindye and lyangombe reside in this man's ancestral village. Now, myriad spirits! I call upon you all to help us in our endeavor here today. Now, mkosi! You are not to set upon this man's body again. He will bathe with this dawa. May his body be purified "white." May he obtain all that he desires.

The mfumo continued by adding buhasa and msekela to the clay pot.

Lwanpemba lwanpasi no majembe. All mkosi are to remain here in the bush. This man will bathe with the dawa here in the bush. May he succeed in purging mkosi from his body: and wherever he goes, may he be joyfully received. Even if people (with ban intentions) think of using the luhugulo to place their curses, let them know that we have already taken it into our possession. He who attempts to use luhugulo will be visited by the curse he would place on another. I ask that he no longer be subjected to these afflictions, and that he might pass the days to come in contented tranquility. And even if mlosi should concoct dawa of this sort in the future, I pray that it will have no effect.

Along with the following spell, the mfumo next cast some msongatti mti into the nkanda:

Mnyonyi dawa! Lend us your help. (The mfumo later said that he had decided to call this dawa by this fictitious name so that its real name would not be revealed to the participants in the curing ritual.) Kansyana, Kamunyengesiya! Spirits Kansyana and Mpila! Please gather together and lend us your help. This man, desiring health, marriage, and prosperity, has come here to be cured.

May many women come to him in search of marriage. May so many women come that he has to turn them away—as many as he asks for! Thus rest assured that his body will first be completely purified on this day. May women direct their attention to him and consent in marriage. Thereafter, may the mkosi who causes men to change their minds be prohibited from returning to possess this man!

The mfumo next threw some kagobole, mbonobono, and msubu into the earthen pot; and continuing to chant his spell, he added isomata mti to the nkanda:

May this man be blessed with health, realize his desire to marry, and be favored with children, a parent's treasure. Myriad spirits! Lend us your assistance. Isomata! You can kusomata (touch and drive out) the mkosi who has taken possession of this man. Mkosi! Remain here in this place!

Thereupon mtungulu mti was added to the clay pot, as the mfumo chanted the following spell:

Each and every person makes his requests of mgabo. If not mgabo, then they make their petitions to msimu or lyangombe. You who have concocted this evil dawa, suffer your curse yourself! I pray that this man may live a vigorous, healthy life.

Next the mfumo added some black dawa from the lijonga shell, along with the following spell:

You (to the dawa) can drive away all evil things--mkuli, isigo, iswa, and lyangombe (a spirit who mlosi sets upon and occasionally dispatches as a friendly spirit). Now, drive away any and all mkosi! May this man's body be purified perfect "white". May mkosi depart from among us and settle himself somewhere far away. You are not to remain anywhere in this vicinity. Sickness, leave this man's body. May he never feel pain again. May his body be made pure "white." and may all paths that lie before him, likewise, be purified "white." May his lot in life be attended by prosperity, marriage, children, and health.

Finally the mfumo put the luhugulo into the nkanda and drew a circle around the stone fireplace with the white powder. Sprinkling mtunu mti for purification over it, the mfumo chanted: "All mkosi! Remain here in this place!" Along the way back to the path from the fireplace, the mfumo stopped and prepared a space where he drew a kapelo (circle), in which he drew an X shaped crisscross with white powder (see Fig.4). Next he intoned his spell:

Here is the kapelo in which two paths cross. Here this man will wash with dawa, thus opening up all "paths" and making them pure "white." He rejects mkosi. We pray that all "paths" leading to good fortune be opened to him. If it is prosperity that he seeks, he will surely obtain it since that "path" has been purified "white." May he obtain all that he desires without difficulty. Here, in this kapelo where two paths cross, he will bathe with dawa. May all mkosi be driven away!

D later would wash with ifubo ifile in this kapelo and thus render his body pure.

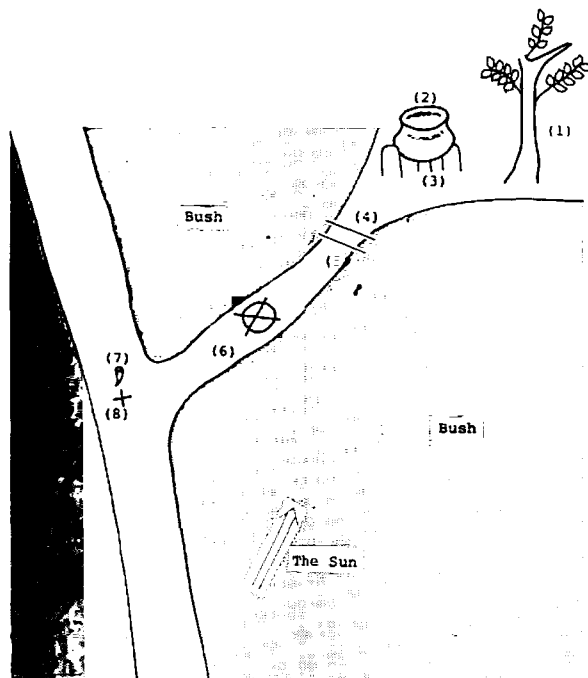
The mfumo subsequently stepped out into the path, where he traced out a crisscross with the white powder:

Here, on this day, this man's curse shall be broken. Here, three paths join together. May mkosi be driven from his body. May all "paths" be opened unto him. He has rejected mlosi. May he be able to marry. May he be blessed with a wife and children.

The mfumo then thrust a kape horn containing sindiko dawa into the ground in front of the encircled crisscross.

He next placed the nkanda on the stone fireplace and set fire to the wood:

Today, we have come here to the msekela tree. Mlosi casts his spells; and the mfumo breaks them. All mkosi, fall from this man's body and remain here in this place! When we leave and return to the



- (1): Msekela tree.
- (2): Nkanda.
- (3): Stone fireplace.
- (4): Black line.
- (5): White line.
- (6): Kapelo where earthen pot for ifubo ifile was placed.
- (7): Kape horn is thrust into the ground.
- (8): Crisscross with white powder.

Fig. 4. Sketch of the place where the mfumo treated the curing ritual for D.

house, I pray that all mkosi be prevented from following us. All mkosi are to remain in this place!

When the ifubo began to boil, the nkanda was removed from the fire and set down nearby. D, crouched over the nkanda, was covered with a blanket, and bathed in the steam of the dawa — the ifubo ifyu treatment. The mfumo shook his rattle and chanted his spell:

All mkosi, depart from this man's body. We have made here, on this day, three paths which cross. If this man's illness be the result of an act of mkosi, we will succeed in driving away all mkosi. All mkosi! Today, we will bury you here! If it is mlosi who placed this evil thing within this man's body, come out! Mkosi, go away! If it is mlosi who has concocted this dawa, leave him now! We have boiled this ifubo within the kapelo. Whatever dawa mlosi may concoct, let him know that we will always succeed in breaking his curses!

While D continued the ifubo ifyu treatment, the mfumo drew two lines, one white and one black, between the fireplace and the spot where the ifile nkanda had been placed. He used the black dawa in the lijonga shell to draw the line near the fireplace, and the white powder for the one by the nkanda.

The spell he intoned while drawing the black line is as follows:

If it is mlosi who set this evil dawa upon him, we now part company. You are to remain here. We will bury all mkosi here, at this place. Never chase after this man again! His body has been washed completely clean. Do not possess him again.

And while drawing the white line, he chanted: "May his body be purified perfect 'white', and may all mkosi remain behind in the bush."

Having completed the ifubo ifyu treatment, D stepped over the black and white lines, sat down near the nkanda containing the ifile, and washed himself pure with the dawa water. All the while, the mfumo chanted his spell:

Now, may this man's disorders be rectified. Here, he will wash away all mkosi. May the heart of the person who has worked these evil deeds be soothed in the same way that this water will cool his heated body.

Having finished the ifubo ifile, D moved to the path. The mfumo dumped the dawa from the nkanda onto the fire to extinguish it. "Now, myriad mgabo, lyangombe! We have buried all mkosi. All mkosi are to remain here in this place!"

Next a stone was placed on the crisscross that had been drawn in the path, which the mfumo covered with a kasimba (genet) pelt. (According to K's explanation, the kasimba is a nocturnal cat. Thus, D's wide, open eyes, like those of the kasimba, will frighten away mlosi when he comes to place his curses in the night.) Also the mfumo's hatchet was placed nearby. D then sat down on the covered stone and placed his feet firmly on the mfumo's hatchet (to cut asunder the intent of mlosi's curse).

At first D sat facing towards the morning sun for quite some time, and then turned to gaze in the direction of the village. The mfumo opened ten incisions on D's body (in the same places as in Example I), into which he rubbed the dawa kept in the kape horn:

Now, omnipotent dawa, you can quell all evil things. Take pity on this man whom mlosi has plunged into difficulties. If it really be true that mlosi is behind this, we call upon you, omnipotent dawa, to subdue him and crush the power out of his curse. Just as all people make their requests to the spirits, lyangombe and msimu, I too make my prayers. He has come here to you today to request that you protect his body against mlosi's wickedness. Enter into his body and guard him against mlosi's curses. He has sat facing the rising sun, and likewise to the south; he has gazed in all four directions. May he be blessed with health, prosperity, marriage, and children. Now, he has set his eyes upon the path which leads to his village. May he readily obtain that which he desires. He has sat on the kape to pray that all "paths" which lie before him lead to good fortune, and that all "paths" be purified "white." We ask that whatever the curse mlosi may cast, he never succeed in taking possession of this man's body. If it be iswa who has set upon him, may he be made to reveal who it is that has dispatched him. And may he never be possessed by a spirit that will not reveal his identity.

May his remaining days pass in health, and may he be blessed by many people. All mkosi are to remain here! May the mlosi who would

prevent this man from marrying be made to suffer his own evil curse! Even if mlosi should turn to the practice of kasomi (a sorcery which involves borrowing the dawa's strength to thrust needles into peoples bodies through black magic), I command that same kasomi to attack mlosi. Today, a dawa which repels all dawas has been rubbed into his body. I command that, if either thunder, snakes, or lions be sent as familiar spirits, they all return to the person who sent them. Omnipotent dawa, enter into his body and guard against any evil mlosi may attempt to work and erase the effects any of his concoctions might have. And if this man should walk upon dawa which mlosi has placed in his path, may that dawa have no effect. Protect him until all mlosi, astonished by your powers, give up their evil intentions, and can only wonder who in the world they have come up against. He has rubbed dawa into his body which opens up all paths; and may it work to open those leading in the direction of the rising sun, as well as those leading to setting sun and into the heavens. May his body be made pure "white." May the heart of mlosi turn as black as the evil it embraces. (Here black means that the heart loses its energy and one falls into a state of lethargy.) When mlosi lies in wait along the path thinking to cast a spell upon him, may he pass by without being noticed at all. Then, upon being informed of this by another person, let mlosi be taken with surprise, "what, he has already passed by?" Let anyone who thinks to bring illness upon this man be afflicted himself with that same illness he would wish upon another!

Finally the mfumo stood with his back to D. Reaching behind him he took hold of D's hands, lifted them upwards, and then released them (symbolizing the flying away of all mkosi). D, having completed his treatment, returned to the village as fast as his legs would carry him. The remaining participants, and I likewise, followed after him.

(ii) Dispensation of medicine

In the evening, after completing the third curing ritual in the hut containing B's hearth, the mfumo gave D six different types of mti, along with directions for their use:

(1) Mti revealed through dreams

Before retiring that same night, D covered a fragment of a clay pot with a piece of bark from the mkugumwelu tree, set it on fire, and bathed in the smoke.

(2) Mti for internal consumption

D cut up the three to four day portion of roots from the kagobole and msekela trees and soaked them in water. These were to be taken in the morning and evening.

(3) Enema mti

D cut up the three to four day supply of roots from the mbundu, lujongololo, kagobole, and msekela trees and placed them in water. This water was then warmed, placed into a kankoteko (an instrument used in the administration of an enema made by cutting off the neck of the calabash and inserting a thin reed through the pointed end), and injected through the anus.

(4) Mti administered by bathing

Mpapa and msekela roots, which the mfumo had already pulverized, were dissolved into water and used for bathing.

(5) Mti for external use

Powdered mpapa was mixed with castor oil and massaged into the epidermis.

Excluding the iluko (laxative) materials and their method of administration, all treatment procedures for expelling mkosi have been examined above.

3. The Essence and Process of the Curing Ritual

I have provided a thorough description of the curing ritual process. As we have seen in the two examples above, the respective treatments of the two different sicknesses are nearly the same, although I detailed their distinguishing characteristics. Bearing these differences in mind, I will now analyze the more important aspects of the curing ritual and its process.

(i) Time

The curing rituals, as the two above examples reveal, are largely concentrated in the morning and evening, evidencing a clear relationship between these times and the rising and setting sun. Patients who bathe with ifubo ifyu sit facing the morning sun or the evening sun. In Example 2, that the mfumo, holding the msekela branch, intones his spell facing towards the sun indicates a relationship between the sun and the ritual.

In Tongwe beliefs, the sun is regarded as identical to mungu, the creator (Kakeya, 1977: 381). That is, the sun is the source of strength, energy, and vitality of all things; as the Tongwe say, "All things gaze upon the sun."

The mfumo explained that the Tongwe pray that a person's illness and its source will depart rising up like the morning sun, or that his illness and its cause depart and sink out of sight like the setting sun, and make their choice between morning and evening sun accordingly.

Of course there are times when treatments are conducted in the afternoon, when the divination so dictates. As the mfumo explained, it is sometimes necessary to conduct curing rituals to break mlosi's spells at the same time he cast them.

(ii) Place of treatment

In the case of the curing rituals which appeared in the above examples, they were conducted in the kitchen, near the river, at a trifurcated intersection, and at a termite hill. In fact, almost all of the curing rituals in which I have participated have been conducted in these same places.

Basically, the selection of a place to conduct the treatment sessions is based on the opposition between lugo (the village) and mwisala (the bush); that is, the dualism of the world of men and the world of wild animals and evil beings. It is to the mwisala where men go to eradicate and discard evil beings and expel mkosi; thus evil beings are returned to their original dwelling places.

Within the mwisala, isigo prefers to live in pools in the river, as well as other similar places. Mkuli and iswa, it is said, dwell in the termite hills, and also the mlosi often gather there to conduct their meetings. Thus treatment locations are selected with the intention of returning evil being to their respective natural habitats.

The trifurcated path is also frequently chosen as a place for conducting treatment. In its broadest sense, the word nsila (way, path, road) can have many symbolic meanings. Here, however, trifurcated nsila is used in a specific sense, rooted in and growing out of its full of array of nuance. On the one hand, it is a place where people walking on different paths meet one another—a place where one often meets with good fortune. On the other hand, however, it is a place where fellow travelers part company. The latter meaning applies for the curing ritual, which establishes the junction of three paths as the place where the patient parts with the evil beings and mkosi who have taken possession of his body.

The place where the river bank is grown with kagobole trees and the trifurcated intersection near the msekela tree were chosen as treatment locations in the above examples because of the symbolic content of these trees, which will be examined in the following section.

The curing rituals carried out in the kitchen differs only superficially from what we have observed. This location is selected, according to the mfumo, in order to break curses that have been placed on people from within the village, in addition to completing the treatment begun in the mwisala. These curing rituals also contain an aspect of counter-magic--the principle of breaking a curse originating in the village at the point of its origin--against mlosi and the evil beings. Then again, it is also possible to link this curing ritual with the so-called rite of passage, as evidenced in its most general features; the separation, margin, and aggregation phases (Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1969). That is, it is possible to think that the curing ritual carried out in the village corresponds to the separation and aggregation phases, while the treatment administered in the mwisala equates to the margin phase.

(iii) Participants

It is normal for the patient's wife, his relatives, and even his friends to participate in the curing rituals. It appears that as long as the divination oracle makes no specific designations, each participant decides whether he will attend solely according to his own convenience. Those who take part help, collect firewood, clear the ground and boil the ifubo, where the curing ritual will take place. They are also expected to confirm the results of the curing ritual, which their roles as assistants qualifies them to do.

(iv) Ifubo ifyu (hot ifubo) and ifubo ifile (cold ifubo)

This phase of the therapeutic process constitutes the basis of the curing ritual. As a general pattern, ifubo ifyu consists of bathing in steam containing the sacred dawa in order to drive out mkosi and evil beings who haunt the body, while ifubo ifile works to wash away sickness with cold water containing mti. As we have seen in Example 1, only ifubo ifile can be administered repeatedly during the course of the curing ritual.

The symbolic dualism of the ifyu/ifle treatments--adding heat to expel mkosi and other evil beings in contrast to bathing in cold water to cool their strength and purpose--comprises a fundamental theme of the curing ritual.

(v) Removal of the fundamental causes of disease

Here we can observe the foundation of the curing rituals conducted in the bush. Although the diverse causes of disease make this process rich in variety, a typical pattern emerges in Example 1: the source of disease is personified in an effigy drawn out on the ground, the banana stalk is used to represent the dwelling place to which the source of disease is to return, and the black chicken, along with the black cloth, is given as an offering to the evil being causing the illness. The chicken is then sacrificed to determine the outcome of the treatment. And finally the root cause of the disease is exorcised by placing the chicken's blood in the ifubo and bathing in its steam.

Still another important aspect of the curing ritual that merits attention is the treatment method involving making incisions at the two places on the patient's body where life itself is thought to reside--the head and chest--and rubbing dawa kept in animal horn into these cuts. It is these two places, in addition to the remaining eight described above in Example 1 that the Tongwe consider the most appropriate spots for applying powerful dawa to protect the body against evil beings. The dawa used here generally contains powerful mti and sikomelo. This method of treatment can be compared to the injection of Western medicine, and, along with the ifubo cure, is most representative of the arsenal the mfumo has available to combat disease.

Differing from Example 1 in that the mighty isigo lies at the source of the disease, Example 2 does not require such an intricate and laborious

method of treatment. In principle, however, it is very similar to Example 1.

(vi) Lines to prevent the exorcised spirit from following the patient home

Having completed the treatment to expel mkosi and the source of illness, the patient steps over these lines, drawn in black dawa, and sets upon his way home. These lines function to block the cause of his disease and mkosi from pursuing the patient once he departs the place where the exorcism took place. Sometimes the black lines are outlined in white in order to purify the patient's body "white." It is also possible to draw a parallel between this hindrance line and the boundary line separating the margin and aggregation phases of the rite of passage.

(vii) The abandonment and burial of mkosi and the source of disease

Once the source of disease and mkosi have been expelled from the patient's body, they, along with chicken and black cloth which had been offered to them, the cloth the patient was wearing, and the patient's other self, as represented by the nails cut from her fingers and toes, and her hair, are covered with an earthen pot and left in the bush. Furthermore, even though the leftover dawa from the ifubo treatment is discarded at the dumping ground, the principle is consistent.

(viii) The spells

The spells play an integral part in the curing rituals discussed above. While apprehensive that verbatim quotation of spells in the two examples above would be overly complicated and even tedious, I have purposely reproduced the spells fully. More important than striving for elegance, I thought that this would best express the meaning of each treatment exercise. The constant appearance of the repetitions, stereotyped phrases in the spells represents the nucleus of the logic that sustains the mfumo's treatment, in his own words. The content of the spells can be arranged as follows:

(1) Supplications are made to the mysterious beings, as manifested in the myriad mgabo, lyangombe, mahasa, kasindye, and msimu, for their divine protection and aid.

(2) The focus of the treatment lies in exorcising such evil beings as isigo, mlosi, and mkuli, and breaking the curses they have concocted; in addition to expelling mkosi (impurities) which have been collected in the body through the malicious deeds of the evil spirits, or through a buildup of other various factors.

(3) The object of the treatment is to exorcise evil beings and mkosi from the body and purify it perfect "white," as well as open up and cleanse pure "white" the "paths" leading to health, fertility, and prosperity.

The spells consist of a combination of the stock phrases, which embody their content and form their nucleus, specific words selected to accord with the root cause of a patient's symptoms and illness, and the results of the divination.

THE LOGIC OF THE DAWA

In the course of the discussion thus far I have presented a detailed description of the symbolic behavior and spells which form the essential core of the curing ritual. As far as the dawa, still another important structural element, is concerned however, I have simply listed the materials. In this section I will focus on the dawa to clarify what types of materials are chosen for dawa, and for what reasons.

Here I will concentrate my description and analysis on the mti examined in the first section (Dawa Collection) and the mti and sikomelo described in Examples 1 and 2. Unfortunately, however, I have to exclude

here the dawa stored in animal horns and rubbed into incisions made on the body, since K received this dawa from another mfumo and I have not been able to find out what it is made of. In principle, however, its logic is the same as that of the mti and sikomelo I will discuss below. (For a description of the same type of dawa materials that other mfumo have used, see Kakeya, 1977: 420.)

1. The Logic of Mti

In Table 3, I have arranged the 18 varieties of vegetable medicine, mti, which have appeared in the descriptions above, according to their vernacular name, scientific name, family name, in addition to the curing ritual in which they were used. Below I will take up the various mti, and look at why each one was chosen as mti and the source from which its curative power derives.

(i) Description of 18 types of mti

(1) Buhasa (also known as kankundu)

This tree's name originates from the indispensable role it plays in the Mahasa ceremony, a ceremony in worship of Mahasa, twins believed to be the incarnation of spirits. Its bark is white, a color thought to signify the world of the spirits, as well as health, purity, and auspicious spirits in particular. Likewise, this tree's curative power derives from its whiteness.

(2) Isomata

Isomata is a woody vine which grows near water and termite hills, also the dwelling places of isigo (water) and mkuli (termite hills). The isomata has strong thorns which snag or arrest people who pass closely by. Hence the mfumo's explanation that this tree's name derives from the verb isa (to come) and mata (to take hold and throw away) makes it clear that its name is linked with its thorns.

(3) Kagobole

Like isomata, this tree also has strong thorns. Its name comes from the verb gobola (to pull), and is thus linked to its thorns. The kagobole is said to "pull out" the spirits and "drag out" the cause of disease.

(4) Katiyatiya (also known as mkola)

Chewing the bark of this tree is said to produce a sensation akin to a drunken frenzy; thus the derivation of its alternate name from the verb kola (to become intoxicated). This characteristic, combined with the pungent odor its bark emits, is very useful in driving out the cause of a disease, according to the mfumo. The name katiyatiya comes from the verb tiya (to slip and fall), an etymology which is not clear, but is thought to make the cause of disease slide out from the body.

(5) Kalilokabali (otherwise known as kangululungululu)

Poisonous, administration of large doses occasionally causes death. Its name, it was explained, is linked to the words kaliio (small flame) and kabali (locking bar of a gate). Its bark is red, the color of fire. When mlosi, iswa, mkuli, and other such evil beings are confronted with this mti, they, thinking that a fire has been set in front of them, desist in placing their curses on people. The origin of the alternate name is unknown.

(6) Lujungololo

The name of this woody vine originates from the verb jongolola (pull out easily), since the roots can be easily pulled from the ground. Thus this mti is said to be able to remove easily impurity and the source of illness.

(7) Mbonobono

The bark of this tree has an evil smell which is said to drive away the cause of disease and impurity. Its name is linked with the verb gonona (render a thing useless), and thus means that the source of

Table 3. Varieties of vegetable medicines which appeared in the curing rituals.

Vernacular name	Scientific name	Family name	used part	Scene in which <i>mti</i> appeared					
				Collecting	Example-1			Example-2	
					i	ii	iv	i	ii
1. buhasa (kankundu)	<i>Strychnos innocua</i>	Loganiaceae	r		x	x		x	
2. isomata	?	?	v			x		x	
3. kagobole	<i>Zizyphus abyssinica</i>	Rhamnaceae	r		x	x	x	x	x
4. katiyatiya (mkola)	<i>Azelia africana</i>	Caesalpiniaceae	b			x		x	
5. kalilokabali	<i>Pterospermum febrifugum</i> var. <i>februgineum</i>	Guttiferae	r			x		x	
6. lujongololo	<i>Monanthes sp.</i>	Annonaceae	r						x
7. mbonobono	?	?	r			x		x	
8. mkungumwelu (mloluwahale)	<i>Sterculia quiqueloba</i>	Sterculiaceae	b	x	x			x	x
9. mpapa	<i>Markhamia obtusifolia</i>	Bignoniaceae	r						x
10. msekela	<i>Antidesma venosum</i>	Euphorbiaceae	r,l	x	x		x	x	x
11. msilantenjela	<i>Gardenia jovis-tomantis</i>	Rubiaceae	r			x			
12. msongatti	<i>Diplorhynchus condylocarpan</i>	Apocynaceae	r		x			x	
13. msubu	<i>Dombeya rotundifolia</i>	Sterculiaceae	r			x		x	
14. mtungulu	<i>Pseudolachnostylis maprouneifolia</i>	Euphorbiaceae	r		x	x		x	
15. mtunu	<i>Harungana madagascariensis</i>	Guttiferae	r		x	x		x	
16. mubanga	<i>Pericopsis angolensis</i>	Papilionaceae	r,l					x	
17. mubundu	<i>Entada abyssinica</i>	Mimosaceae	r,l	x		x			x
18. sibanga (likibanga)	<i>Heeria mucronata</i>	Anacardiaceae	b		x	x		x	

b, bark; r, root; l, leaf; v, vine. Example-1: i, the first curing ritual; ii, the second curing ritual; iv, dispensation of medicine. Example-2: i, the ritual conducted in the bush; ii, dispensation of medicine.

disease will lose its power. This does not mean, however, that there is a direct connection between its odor and its name.

(8) Mkungumwelu (also known as mloleluwahale)

In response to my inquiries about the use of this tree, the mfumo invariably called it by its other name during the course of his explanation. This tree is conspicuously white and consequently, is very easy to recognize from a distance, or as the word "leluwahule" means, it "can be seen from far away." An extremely important type of mti, this tree, because of its whiteness, is believed to possess power equivalent to that of the spirits. As we observed in the section treating the spells used in dawa collection, this plant is highly valued as a mti that is revealed in dreams.

(9) Mpapa

The name of this tree is said to derive from the verb papa, which means "to think or ponder various things." Constantly rustling and fluttering in the wind, the leaves of this tree suggest the heart of someone thinking of their lover. As Example 2 makes clear, this mti is used as an aphrodisiac. Thus a woman's heart will throb with audible violence when she hears D's voice, just like the leaves of this tree rustling in the breeze, according to the mfumo.

(10) Msekela

This tree produces many small berries, signifying, it is said, fertility and the gathering together of many people. Its name derives from the verb seka (to laugh). Consequently, this mti is used to cause many people to wear smiles and to gather around the patient in great rejoicing. Likewise, it will enable to be blessed with many children, and become happy in this way.

(11) Msilantenjela

This tree is endowed with a shape differing from that of the other trees; its trunk is very short, while it has many thick branches and very hard wood. Its name derives from the verbs sila (to dislike) and tenjela (to keep away from the body). When this dawa is administered, evil beings trying to approach and possess the patient will develop a dislike for the patient and avoid their body. It is said that not even lightening, which mlosi occasionally dispatches, will not strike this tree.

(12) Msongatti

The butonfu (sap) of this tree is white. For this reason, it is said, msongatti is used to call forth the spirits and exorcise impurity, making the body pure "white". The origin of its name is unknown.

(13) Msubu

Although the color of the exterior surface of this tree's bark is dark, the inside surface is white. Its name originates from the subula (to wash away the dirt from the inside of a vessel). This mti is said to expel isigo and mkuli, wash away impurity, and purify the body "white" like the wood of a tree whose bark has been peeled off.

(14) Mtungulu

The name of this tree derives from the word tungula (to slip and fall). Its bark peels off naturally in patches, making its surface so slippery that it is difficult to climb. The mfumo said that this tree causes evil beings such as isigo and mkuli to slip and fall from the body.

(15) Mtunu

The name of this tree derives from the verb tuna (to reject, to refuse). Its butonfu (sap) is said to be ill-natured; it is not easy to wash from one's clothes. The inside surface of its bark, however, is white. Thus this mti can expel isigo and mkuli, and cleanse the body pure "white."

(16) Mubanga

The wood of this tree is very hard, making it difficult to cut down, even when swinging the axe with all one's might. Ordinarily, the Tongwe

peel the bark off in rings to kill it and wait for it to fall naturally. This process, peeling off the bark to fell the tree, is called banga. Thus the mfumo said that this tree can drive out the cause of illness, as well as make the body strong like the mubanga tree.

(17) Mubundu

This tree's name comes from bundula, meaning "to pull off" or "to pull out." The bark of this tree can be peeled off with a single swing of the hatchet. In addition the roots can be pulled out by digging the ground away from the trunk a little and pulling. Thus it is said that this tree can easily remove evil beings and the source of disease.

(18) Sibanga (also called likibanga)

The name of this tree has the same root as mbanga. Its bark gives off a strong odor, and is said to be effective in exorcising isigo and mkuli.

(ii) Analysis

(1) Names of trees, ecology, and morphology

The Tongwe themselves, in attempt to locate the ultimate source of the function and beneficial effectiveness of the 18 mti described above, for example, have established their own ethno-etymological tradition, as it were. As a general tendency, this tradition associates the name of the tree the verb from which it derives, and in this fashion explains the mti's use and function.

For instance, let us consider the above Example 1; the mti added to the ifubo consists of the following types, all of which functioned respectively: "seize and throw away" (isomata), "pull out" (kagobole), "to cause to slide away" (katiyatiya), "render useless" (mbonobono), "wash away" (msubu), "slip and fall" (mtungulu) "to reject" (mtunu) mkosi and the spells of mlosi.

The medicine administrated during D's curing ritual served two purposes. The first was to: "pull out" (kagobole), "slip out easily" (lujongolo), and "pull out" (mbundu) mkosi, while the second function was to cause women to "smile" (msekela) as they approach D, and, pining for his love, treat him as if they were "thinking" (mpapa) of him.

In most cases these "etymologies" are explained by linking the plant itself with its particular habitat (isomata) or its properties of the bark--msubu and mtungulu, nature of the sap--mtunu and mbundu, and the ease with which the tree can be uprooted lujongololo and mbundu.

Although there is no direct connection between their name itself and their use and function as a mti, we might as well include the names of those trees that derive from a tree's thickness or strength--mbanga and likibanga, respectively.

(2) Color, odor, and toxicity

Still another set of principles employed to explain the use and function of mti concern the tree's color. For example, I have repeatedly stated the symbolic relationship of the color white to health, purity, and auspicious spirits. In the case of buhasa and mkungumwelu, the whiteness of the bark, constitutes an important factor in their selection as mti. The same applies for msubu and mtunu, whose wood beneath the bark is white; and msongatti, whose sap is white. Black, the opposite of white, likewise works as one of the selection criteria in the case of msubu. The prime factor in the selection of the kalilokabali bark as mti is its red color, which suggests fire. Thus, as we can readily see, the color symbolization of these three colors--white, red, black--is particularly important as a factor which stipulates the selection of a plant as mti.

Odor, likewise, constitutes an important variable in the selection process. The powerful stench the bark of the katiyatiya and mbonobono trees emit serves as an example of a mti used to drive away evil beings and the cause of illness. Also the toxicity of certain types of plants (katiyatiya and kalilokabali), when administered in the proper dosages, is

to be included among the factors determining a plant's selection as mti.

2. The logic of sikomelo

Animal medicine, sikomelo, works to give strength to and activate the plant medicine. Since I have thoroughly discussed the various materials and underlying logic of sikomelo in a previous article (Kakeya, 1978), here I will briefly analyze only the sikomelo K used in Example 1.

During the treatment process in Example 1, six types of sikomelo were used; the five the mfumo added to the ifubo ifyu, in addition to that stored in the lijonga shell. I will record the details of K's explanations of the various sikomelo below.

(1) Masombwe (worm snake**)

People who happen to find this snake, hardly ever see, are very lucky. Having two heads, one at each end of its body, this snake can escape quickly and freely in any direction. For this reason, it is said, this snake can break the curses of mlosi, who is known to approach from any and every direction to work his evil deeds, as well as expel such evil beings as isigo and mkuli, and open up the "path" which lies before one.

(2) Nkata

The ceremonial hut (lukangala) used during the installation rite for the mwami, the traditional chief of the Tongwe tribe, is built especially for this one occasion and requires an entire day to construct. The throne in the lukangala where the mwami candidate and his wife sit is called the nkata. Many types of dawa are applied to the nkata to give the mwami strength and expel such evil beings as mlosi. Furthermore many people gather to celebrate at the new chief's installation rite. For these reasons the nkata is considered a powerful sikomelo—it expels evil beings because man's vital energies have been projected into it and it brings the happiness of celebration.

(3) The skull of mwami

The mwami protects the Tongwe land, rules over the people, and is filled with power. Since he is administered many potent medicines at his initiation rite, ordinary mlosi are not able to place curses on him.

This sikomelo adds strength to the ifubo mti, purges evil beings, and brings people happiness (for the same reason as nkata above).

(4) The skull of mlosi

The skeletons of people who die from the medicines used in the ordeal called mwafi, that is, mlosi, are thought to make powerful sikomelo. These bones of the sorcerer enable the dawa, to see through the evil designs of the sorcerer and his henchmen.

This sikomelo can expel, beginning with mlosi, all evil beings and protect people from their malicious intentions.

(5) Nkono fragment (earthen pot)

On rare occasions, people eat too much ugali (a staple food made of powdered maize boiled into a paste) and die. Thus a fragment of the nkono in which the ugali was served is thought to make an excellent sikomelo because it has absorbed the life force of the deceased. It is for this reason that the nkono fragment serves to activate the mti.

(6) Mbeba (electric catfish) bones

The mbeba bones comprise one of the ingredients of the dawa kept in the lijonga shell. Touching this catfish produces a numbing shock. Thus the bones of this catfish, where the shock-producing electricity is thought to reside, are used to numb evil beings and the sources of disease, causing them to retreat.

Besides the mbeba sikomelo, the lijonga dawa, contains two types of mti. One is the kalilokabali, which I have already treated in the section on mti, and the second type is the roots of a tree that has fallen across

the path. This second mti is also thought to possess the special properties of a sikomelo, since it absorbs the vital energies of people who step over as they pass along the path. For this reason it is said to be endowed with the curative powers of both a sikomelo and mti medicine.

These different sikomelo were administered with supplications that they activate the mti placed in the ifubo ifyu, expel isigo and mlosi, and that the woman A be blessed with children, as well as receive blessings of other people.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

1. Logic and Background of the Mfumo's Treatment Process

As I have written previously, the mfumo occupies a position at the nexus of the various relationships that comprise the world of the Tongwe; those between man and nature, between man and man, and between man and the supernatural beings (Kakeya, 1977: 379). Moreover, it can also be said that the mfumo's diverse activities can be understood only within the total context--his cosmos--of reciprocal organic relationships between nature, man, and supernatural beings.

Just as Turner stated in his analysis of the many rites and ceremonies of Ndembu society, the Tongwe likewise "have a paucity of myths and cosmological or cosmogonic narratives" (Turner, 1969: 14). The method that I have adopted in my attempt to fathom the meaning and underlying logic of the mfumo's curing ritual consists of; thoroughly recording what I have observed through participation, collecting the mfumo's own interpretations of the individual treatment procedures, and organizing them systematically. That is, I have tried to analyze the curing rituals from the viewpoint of the mfumo's interior world, stressing the Tongwe's own interpretations (folk-interpretation). Although the recorded activities and interpretations of only one mfumo constitute the source materials used in this article, they are founded on the teachings of the master mfumo, Kasonta, my teacher. In addition, my experiences in assisting other mfumo in their treatment activities lie behind the observations I have made here. Of course there are individual differences to be observed in the way each mfumo conducts his curing rituals, but even so, they are roughly the same in overall content.

One particular characteristic that runs consistently through the mfumo's numerous activities is his constant petitions for the assistance and divine protection of such spirits as lyangombe, kasindye, mahasa, and mgabo, and the ancestral ghosts, msimu. Relying on the power of the spirits who possess him and supported by the divine protection of the myriad mysterious beings, the mfumo's function, in order to expel the source of a patient's disease, is to confront such evil beings as isigo and mlosi, who, in one of his aspects, personifies the strains of social relationships. It can be said that the treatment of the mfumo has developed in response to the manifestation of the wills of the myriad mysterious beings and their control.

The verbal aspects of his activities comprise the most important supporting pillar of the curing process. The mfumo evokes the power of the trees through his spells; discerns the will of the mysterious beings through spirit-possession; and again through his spells, restrains the mysterious beings. He also summons forth the evil being that has taken possession of a person in person and has him speak out of his own accord. The mfumo likewise reveals the pre-posterous evil designs, along with their source, that have stolen into the everyday lives of diligent people. He expresses these verbally, and indicates a course of treatment through his spells.

The second pillar of the mfumo's curative activities is his masterful use of the technique of incarnating the invisible mysterious beings and converting them into objects that can be manipulated through symbolic behavior. The malicious spirit isigo, for example, was graphically represented with white powder, and the place to which he was to return was indicated with a single banana stalk. Likewise, the patient was made to trample on the hatchet and swallow a chicken heart off its blade in order to sever the cause of illness. The symbolic behavior that comprises the mfumo's therapy, including the examples above, is based on the dualistic relationship of opposition and complementation, as can be seen in the lugo (the village) and mwisala (the bush where wild animals and evil things live), and the ifyu (hot) and ifile (cold) confrontations, as well as the color symbolism of white, red, and black. In addition to including particular features of the rite of passage, exemplified in the separation, margin, and aggregation phases, the symbolic behavior has been systematized to work hand in hand with the spells and dawa to cleanse the body perfect "white" and open up and purify the "path" leading to good fortune.

The third supporting pillar of the mfumo's treatment is his mastery over the mti and sikomelo dawa. He perceives a special power in the mti congruous with the objective of the treatment, and thus is able to exorcise mkosi and other evil beings from the patient's body through the cooperation of the myriad mti. The logic of the mti selection process is founded on the system of symbolic logic that combines the name of the plant as we have seen above, with its morphology and ecology, with the disease to be cured. Likewise, a tree's color, odor, or degree of virulence constitutes still another source of its curative power. For the most part, the logic of sikomelo, whose curative effects are based on the animal's habits and ecology (Kakeya, 1978: 20-23), and the logic of the mti reveals a close link between the treatment of illness and Tongwe ethno-science.

At the base of the phenomenon of sickness and unhappiness lurks the pathology of everyday interpersonal relations, in which the mysterious beings are deeply involved. That is, unhappiness and disease are messages telling of strains in the cosmos—the weave of nature, man, and mysterious beings. The mfumo, set against the background of the logic of his ethno-science, ethno-sociology, and cosmology, bears the role of correcting these strains.

2. The Foundation of the Logic of Mti

In Examples 1 and 2 above, I have described and analyzed the materials used for mti. The types of mti which the mfumo has at his disposal are extremely varied; they easily exceed 300 types. The logic of the mti which I have examined here does not include all mti. Of the three phases which form the basic structure of curative therapy (treatment for incentive causes, treatment for primary causes, and symptomatic treatment; Kakeya, 1977: 423-432), the logic of the mti that I have endeavored to clarify in this article corresponds mainly to the treatment for incentive causes phase and the treatment for primary causes phase. I have not gone into a more detailed analysis of the mti used in the symptomatic treatment phase, as this is properly the subject for another article.

The logic of the mti used in the two examples above consisted of a logic of symbols which combines the nature of a disease with the name, morphology, ecology, and other features of the plant used as medicine. This analysis indicates the importance of ethno-etymology. Of course, the discourse on etymology presented here is not at all precise, in the linguistic sense. Nonetheless, it is obvious that ethno-etymology is one of the important keys to understanding how the mfumo goes about selecting mti. Once when I was walking in the mountains with a Tongwe friend

collecting the vernacular names of different trees, he often, in response to my inquiries, stopped, and only after chopping at the tree with his hatchet to confirm its hardness, peeling off the bark and inspecting the color of its interior surface, testing its smell, or chewing on it, would he state its name. This type of behavior is linked with the logic of the mti examined here.

When we consider the mti as the crystallization which the Tongwe's discriminating observation of nature has combined with symbolic thought to produce, we can really accept the names they have given the plants as a repository of Tongwe curative knowledge. We can also say that the naming system of the mti functions as an efficient way of remembering the names of an immense number of plants. Thus we can truly comprehend the Tongwe saying, "All plants are dawa," given this background.

3. From the Viewpoint of Comparative Study

The development of what is called Medical Anthropology constitutes a conspicuous trend in anthropology in recent years. Its area of concern is quite large, and even though it originated in the study of the third world, this new field has come to include the medical systems of advanced countries among its diverse research topics. Such introductory texts and monographs as Loudon (1976), Landy (1977), and Foster and Anderson (1978) suggest some of this trend. It appears that the time is ripe for further comparative studies of man's worldwide medical activities.

The trend these various studies reveal has aroused a strong interest on my part. Nonetheless, I think it is also important to pursue comparative studies based on detailed description and analysis of particular ethnic groups. In this regard, Turner's series of studies on the Ndembu (Turner, 1967, 1969, 1975) represent important contributions in this field of endeavor.

The Ndembu differs from the Tongwe in that their society is matrilineal, but they share much in common with the slash-and-burn horticultural Bantu groups who inhabit the woodland belt of East and Central Africa. The world of Ndembu ethno-science has been depicted in detail in The Forest of Symbols by Turner, who penetrated deeply into, literally, "the forest of symbols" (Turner, 1967). Apart from the similarities between the underlying principles of the curing rituals of the Ndembu and the Tongwe, the resemblance between the materials used for treatment and their logic is of compelling interest. For Example, the chikwata tree (Zizyphus mucronata), used by the Ndembu in the curing of disease, has "strong thorns" which "catch" (kukwata) or arrest the passer-by (Turner, 1969: 26). The kagobole tree (Zizyphus abyssinica), of the same genus as the chikwata tree, can "pull out" with its strong thorns, according to the Tongwe mfumo. Furthermore, the mulendi tree (Sterculia quinqueloba) is used by the Ndembu as an important medicine because "it has a very slippery surface" which "makes the 'desease' (musong'u) slip away from the patient" (Turner, 1969: 25). Among the Tongwe, a tree of the same species as the mulendi, called mlolawahale, is considered important because its white bark "enables it to be seen from far away."

In conclusion it can be said that these differences between materials and sustaining logic, the very foundation stones of the world of traditional medicine, point to the abundant harvest the comparative study of the ethno-sciences of the many Bantu peoples who live in the woodland belt of East and Central Africa will bring. At the same time, if we take the logic of traditional medicine, which is founded on thought and treatment that accords with nature, as our premise, we can hope to contribute to the elucidation of the complex relationship between culture and nature, mediated as it is by symbolic thought.

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NOTES

- *¹ I conducted my first research among the Tongwe beginning in April 1971 through October 1972.
- *² The scientific names of the plants follow the list by Nishida and Uehara (1981).
- *³ Here the mfumo did not actually offer the beads and honey, but rather only included these words in his spell, since they were no available.
- *⁴ The specimen of a worm snake collected by H. Takasaki at Kasoge on 8 November 1981 was identified as *Typhlops graueri* by Dr. A. F. Stimson, Reptile Section, Department of Zoology, British Museum (Takasaki, personal communication).

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